



Jane Swift
Governor
Robert Gittens
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Commissioner

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MCDHH NEWS



A Publication of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Budget Cuts to Affect the Agency!

by James O'Donnell, Deputy Commissioner, Programs & Policy

The economic repercussions of September 11th hastened the decline of an already slowing economy, forcing the Governor and legislature to make \$650 million worth of cuts in this year's fiscal budget (July 1, 2001-June 30, 2002). As a result, MCDHH had to cut \$406,000, or approximately 8% of our overall budget, in late November. This cut came on top of a loss of \$300,000 resulting from the expenses incurred when we consolidated our two Boston offices, an expense that would normally be covered by the provision of supplemental funding which we had to absorb ourselves. While we were able to absorb this "virtual" cut, the second mandatory funding cut of \$406,000 has forced us to implement cuts in all service areas, and we hope that a combination of voluntary layoffs, retirements and personnel changes will enable us to forgo further service-related cuts. The cuts by program:

Interpreter/CART services:

- 1) **Contract interpreters** who provide communication access for staff and critical emergency interpreting in medical, mental health and legal emergencies are being reduced. It is estimated that about 400 of these requests for direct services to consumers/clients of MCDHH will go unfilled in this fiscal year.
- 2) **Community requests** for interpreting and CART for public meetings and community events, formerly paid for by the Commission, will not be covered for the balance of this fiscal year. This affects an estimated 2,100 requests.
- 3) **CART mentoring** program is postponed beyond this fiscal year. This program was designed to follow up on the joint MCRA/MCDHH CART training and produce several new CART providers to relieve the shortage of this important communication tool for late deafened adults.
- 4) Likewise, **fiscal support** for development of new interpreters; addition of interpreters to cover emergencies; and the referral database will decline in this fiscal year due to budget cuts.

Communication Access, Training and Technology Services

- 1) **Trainings:** Due to voluntary layoffs and a decrease in exhibit funds, CATTs will lose the ability to accept and handle a large portion of the increasing number of requests by professionals and service providers for training on communication access.
- 2) **Internet/website:** A second position lost due to voluntary layoff will require job restructuring and cause delays in the processing of website updates and requests.
- 3) **Printing:** The MCDHH newsletter, which reached 30,000 citizens of the Commonwealth quarterly, has ceased to exist as a printed publication and will continue only in electronic format. New brochures will also not be printed this year.

Case management:

- 1) **DHILS:** The Deaf and hard of hearing independent living services statewide will have a 1% to 7% cut. It is estimated that this will result in 2,300 fewer hours of services for clients of independent living centers.
- 2) **Assistive Technology:** a cut of 50% of the existing fund for obtaining equipment such as hearing aids and alerting devices for clients of MCDHH. These are clients who have no other means of obtaining

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New Secretary of Executive Office of Health and Human Services appointed.

Robert Gittens, formerly Commissioner of the Department of Youth Services, has replaced William O'Leary as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Prior to this appointment, he was First Assistant in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. He also served as Chair of the Boston School Committee, where he received high praise from parents and advocates alike. He is taking the reins of an agency that oversees close to half of all state spending. We wish him well and look forward to working with him. ■

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS**



Commissioner's Corner

by Barbara Jean Wood, Commissioner

Dear Friends,

As I write to you today, I am filled with many emotions because this is my last Commissioner's Corner article. Most of you have already heard that I am moving to Denver, Colorado. I will depart MCDHH and my adopted home state of Massachusetts at the end of January 2002.

The Colorado Legislature recently passed legislation to create the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and I've been hired to be the first Executive Director. My responsibilities will be to establish and develop the services and programs for CCDHH. This is a professional challenge and an opportunity that I could not turn down.

I've recently been reminiscing of my first days at MCDHH. Craig Andersen, interpreter and I were the first two staff members and we had a big office space at 600 Washington Street on the 5th floor. He and I had one desk, one phone, and two chairs! We've certainly come a long way since then! MCDHH has grown to be a model state agency with 4 offices across the Commonwealth, 75 staff, and 4 major programs: Case Management & Social Services, Interpreter & CART Referral, Communication Access, Training and Technology Services, and our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Independent Living Programs and Services.

The MCDHH History Book is filled with stories and accomplishments of so many wonderful people who have either been on staff or served on one of the many committees/workgroups. I would like to acknowledge your support and efforts over the last 15 years as we all worked together to make Massachusetts one of the BEST places to live because of so many communication accessible services. Another thing that makes this such a GREAT place to live is the fact that all of the different segments of our community (Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late-Deafened, Deaf Blind, interpreters and other service providers) along with the Disability Community continue to respect each other and agree to work together for the benefit of all even if we sometimes disagree. We have accomplished so much over the years because we worked as a team.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services has selected Kim Egan to serve as Acting Commissioner until a new Commissioner is found to fill the position.

I will miss you all and remember our times together fondly. Thank you for your support, your assistance, and for supporting MCDHH through the good times and the bad.

Best wishes to you during these days of change and uncertainty. You will be in my thoughts and I look forward to the continued success of MCDHH. ■



September 11th

by Jonathan O'Dell, Director, CATTS

The horrific attacks on America this past September 11th affected all of us deeply. Some of us lost family members; others, people they knew, but all of us were saddened and shocked by the magnitude of the disaster that was forced on us.

On September 14th, many of us gathered outside on the street to attend a prayer vigil and memorial service to honor the memories of those we lost. It was a simple yet emotional service. Most fitting of all was the sheer linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity represented by those who attended. It brought home President Bush's message that anyone who would think they could divide us was wrong, and that we would stand united in the face of a threat to all.

This holiday season, may those we lost rest in peace, may their loved ones find comfort in the affection and caring of a nation, and may we all have the strength and the courage to face every day as a blessing and make the most of the time we are granted in this world. ■



For inquiries, or to submit an article please send it in attention of MCDHH News Editor:
Chris Porter, MCDHH
150 Mount Vernon Street, Suite 550, Dorchester, MA 02111
(617) 740-1600 Voice
(617) 740-1700 TTY

REMINDER: We have moved...

Our new address is:
150 Mount Vernon Street,
Suite 550
Dorchester, MA 02125

Telephone:
(617) 740-1600 Voice
(617) 740-1700 TTY

Regulation and Legislative Update: December 2001

by Jeannine Dusombre, Legal Counsel to the Commissioner

Here is a brief list of some legislation the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) is following for this legislative session.

2001-2002 House & Senate Bills of Interest and Support to the MCDHH

<i>Bill Number & Name</i>	<i>Update</i>	<i>Summary</i>
<u>S. 227 now S. 2168</u> (Senator Brewer)	11/05/01 S Reported from the committee on Education, Arts and Humanities 11/05/01 S New draft of S227 11/05/01 S Bill reported favorably and referred to the committee on <u>Senate Ways and Means</u>	Bill provides attorneys to represent certain children with disabilities and their parents.
<u>S. 230</u> (Senator Antonioni)	Public Hearing date Sept 12 at 10am in Gardner Auditorium 11/05/01 S Bill reported favorably by committee and referred to the committee on <u>Senate Ways and Means</u>	Further defines the term "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) so as not to permit any changes in the program, placement or services with the adoption of the FAPE standard. As of January 02, the State standard of "maximum feasible benefit" changes to the Federal FAPE standard.
<u>S. 735</u> (Senator Brewer)	Currently in <u>Senate Ways and Means</u>	Provides insurance coverage for the cost of two hearing aids every three years.
<u>S. 759</u> (Senator Moore)	Currently in <u>Senate Ways and Means</u>	Requires insurance providers to pay for the costs of providing competent interpreter services.
<u>S. 1585</u> (Senator Morrissey)	The Committee on <u>Senate Steering and Policy</u> - reported to bill favorably and on 09/13/01 was ordered to a third reading	Allow access for people raising or training Service Dogs to assist people with disabilities.
<u>S. 1920</u> (Senator Pacheco and Finegold)	11/21/01 Passed to be engrossed	The bill mandates that wireless telephone service providers establish Enhanced 911 Services in the Commonwealth.

The Senate passed Senate Bill 1920, establishing wireless enhanced 911 services, on November 21, 2001. Enhanced 911 service allows a telephone user to dial 911 and reach the police or fire department. The "enhanced 911 service" provides for automatically identifying the telephone number and the location of the call in case the caller cannot communicate with the emergency service. Currently, when a cell phone user calls 911 services, the public safety officials cannot identify what number the call is from, or the location of caller. The bill requires the statewide telecommunication emergency board to implement the same system as the landline system we have currently in the state.

Senator Pacheco has said that the enhanced 911 bill for wireless phone service is really a public safety measure. The bill increases the service charge from 35 cents to 75 cents for 911 calls.

The House must now pass the bill before the Governor can sign it into law.

New Service for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Social Security Administration just announced a new service. Now, people who are deaf or hard of hearing can apply for Retirement, Survivors, Medicare and Lump Sum Death Benefits immediately when they call Social Security's toll-free TTY/TDD number, 1-800-325-0778.

You can call Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and file a claim for benefits using a TTY/TDD machine. You'll communicate directly with a representative without the need for a local relay system. ■

Communication Access and the Legal System: Building Relationships

by Carole Rossick, Hard of Hearing Outreach Training Specialist

One of the ways that the staff in the CATTS Department works to promote communication access is through building relationships with other entities, providing technical guidance and conducting trainings as needed.

Over the past decade, Jonathan O'Dell, Director, and others (including myself), have worked with the Trial Courts of the Commonwealth. During that time, Marge Brown, State ADA Coordinator for the Trial Courts (retired), Linda Scalfani, her assistant, and Norma Noone, the ADA Coordinator of the Springfield court system, spend many hours developing the policies and implementing the means of providing communication access to the state court system. Whether you are a juror, witness, defendant, plaintiff, attorney, observer, judge or officer of the court: if you are deaf, late deafened, or have a hearing loss AND make it known to the courts, they will make every effort to accommodate you to ensure effective participation in the legal system. This is accomplished by providing whichever accommodation is requested - interpreter, CART providers, or FM listening systems.

Last summer, I joined Marge and Linda in several in-service trainings of ADA coordinators and was invited to present to the Pike Institute on Law and Disabilities to address new developments in assistive technology. As a result, Pat Freedman, Esq., the Director of the Pike Institute, invited Ruth P. Moore, Communication Access Training Specialist and I, to participate in the Pike Institute on Law and Disabilities of Boston University Law School, Conference on Equal Justice for People with Disabilities held this past September.

Among the attendees was Vicki Lewis, from the Judicial Institute, who was so impressed by the workshop that she has been in touch with Ruth to arrange for additional CATTS in-service trainings to her agency starting next year. This story is just one illustration of how relationships with other entities

have a ripple effect upon the level of awareness and degree of access provided in various communication settings.

The keynote address of this conference was delivered by the Hon. Julian T. Houston, (pictured left) of the Massachusetts Superior Court. An excerpt of his remarks are reprinted here with his permission.



"Sometimes citizens with disabilities accept their exclusion from serving on a jury, even after being informed that the Court will make special arrangement to accommodate their disability. I have frequently interviewed jurors with impaired hearing during the impanelment of a jury at the beginning of a trial, who have asked to be excused from juror service, even though I have offered them the use of a hearing assisted device provided by the Court, or a seat in the jury box that is closer to the witness stand. Having sat in Massachusetts courtrooms as a judge for more than two decades and having experienced my own hearing impairment

for the last ten years, I must say that I have a certain sympathy with those who have declined my offer, for the painful truth is that the acoustics in many Massachusetts courtrooms are nothing short of abominable. Even those with normal hearing often complain about their inability to hear in some of our courtrooms, but the fact is that the technology exists today to design courtrooms that are functional, secure and acoustically excellent. Furthermore, the technology also exists to provide built-in hearing assisted units for everyone who participates in the trial, judges, lawyers, litigants, witnesses and jurors. We are presently in the middle of a major renovation of our state courthouses that will cost our taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. It would be interesting to know the extent to which the plans for the construction and renovation of our courtrooms meet state of the art specifications for the hearing impaired.

Clearly, we need to maintain constant vigilance over the design of our courthouses and courtrooms in order to make the improvements necessary that will insure that the rights of all citizens with disabilities will be protected. While this protection is explicitly mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is always a tendency in large bureaucracies to interpret Federal regulations to local advantage. As a great Massachusetts political leader once said, 'All politics is local.' And so it is essential that we not only transform the architecture of our courthouses to realize the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act, but we must transform the culture of our courthouses, as well. While there are isolated examples of disabled citizens finding employment in the Massachusetts court system today, our employment practices with respect to the disabled, in my judgment, need to be carefully reviewed and thoroughly revised. The Massachusetts court system employs over seven thousand people, only a small percentage of whom have an identifiable disability. We can do better than this, and we must do better. What is required is leadership on the part of the courts to demonstrate to the disabled that the court system is a hospitable work environment, and a plan with goals and objectives that everyone works to meet.

An expanded presence of people with disabilities in our court system, as litigants and witnesses, as jurors and employees will go far to reduce the terrible stigma that has burdened disabled citizens in the courts and in the nation for most of the last century." ■

Are you a Deaf or hard of hearing person in need of a better telephone system in order to communicate effectively?

Call Mary Macone at MCDHH to find out if you qualify for a free or low cost TTY or amplified phone through the Verizon distribution program!

(617) 740-1600 Voice

(617) 740-1700 TTY

MCDHH and Elder Affairs Obtain Federal Grant

by James O'Donnell, Deputy Commissioner

In August of 2001, a team of staff from MCDHH and Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) were able to obtain a grant for \$157,604 from the Federal Administration on Aging to create a regional caregiver training program on providing care to deaf elders. Both agencies are contributing in-kind services of \$55,000 to supplement the actual grant amount from the Federal AOA. The initial plan includes setting up a model center for operation and training. The first center will be a collaborative venture with New England Home for the Deaf (NEHD) and will be located in Danvers. The site will also contain an assistive technology demonstration center.

The Project includes operating a Senior Day Care Center five days a week as a working model for training other caregivers, such as family members and staff of assisted living centers and nursing homes. The rationale for provision of this grant is the rapid increase in the number of Deaf and late deafened elders who lack the social care options of the hearing population. For example, 24% of the population between the ages of 65 and 74 have a hearing loss. The figure jumps to an astounding 36% for those over 75!

Each target group is unique: Deaf elders need peers who can communicate in American Sign Language. Late deafened adults need access to equipment and communication aids. While their needs are different, the common denominator for each is the risk of social isolation. This grant is designed to teach caregivers what kind of services these populations need and in what settings.

The grant is operational this year and a team comprised of MCDHH, EOEA and NEHD staff members meet monthly to design job specifications and contract requirements of the proposed center. One key service MCDHH will be providing is a curriculum for courses dealing with subjects such as Deafness, Deaf Culture, communication access, and assistive listening devices. The goals for the first year are ambitious:

- 5 regional trainings provided
- 250 caregivers, 60 care managers and trained staff professionals
- 20 elders/week served in five day social program.

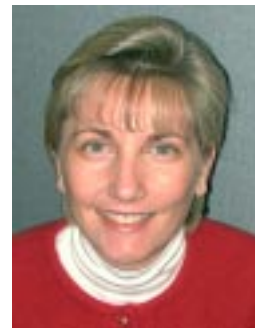
Since the federal fiscal year begins on October 1st, the deadline for these goals is September 30, 2002. The grant will be implemented over four years; years two and three will see a new program and center being set up in areas west and south of Boston. The key members of the team are: Marvin Sallop, MCDHH, Eliza Lake, Elder Affairs, Judith Good of NEHD and Jim O'Donnell from MCDHH. Staff members of each will be involved as well, with Yvonne Dunkle and Jonathan O'Dell from MCDHH working on the social service component and the training curriculum/equipment portion. ■

New Acting Director of Case Management Appointed

by Jonathan O'Dell, Director, CATTS

The budget cutbacks discussed elsewhere in this issue forced MCDHH to temporarily consolidate the position of Director of Case Management and Social Services, a position formerly held by Marilyn Levin, with that of Director of Quality Assurance, a position held by Yvonne Dunkle. Ms. Dunkle is now active in both roles. She has a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Gallaudet University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Suffolk University. Before joining MCDHH in 1999, she was Unit Supervisor for the Deaf Services Unit of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission in Quincy. Ms. Dunkle brings a wealth of experience to her "new" position as Director of Case Management and Social Services, and her willingness to take on this additional duty on top of her already extensive responsibilities within MCDHH is much appreciated.

We hope to be able to re-establish the position of Director of Case Management once the fiscal environment improves. ■



NEW RESOURCE DIRECTORY SLATED FOR DISTRIBUTION IN EARLY SPRING 2002!

The popular MCDHH Resource Directory is currently being revised and is scheduled to be available in the Spring of 2002. The Resource Directory is a major source of information related to services for the Deaf, late deafened, and hard of hearing consumer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over 5,000 copies of the 1999-2000 edition have been distributed over the past two years, and it has become one of the Commission's most popular publications.

If you would like to have your agency or organization listed in our Directory, please fill out the information slip below and return it to the MCDHH. All agencies and organizations listed will receive a copy of this valuable resource as soon as it is printed. ■

2002-2004 Resource Directory Information (Please write clearly).

Name of Business/Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Voice _____ TTY _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Fax: _____

Internet Address: _____

Type of Business/Organization (select all that are applicable)

Advocacy ___ Associations & Organizations ___ Assistive Technology ___
 Cultural ___ Education & Training ___ Employment ___ Evaluation Services ___
 Information & Referral ___ Interpreter/CART Services ___ Legal Services ___
 Mental Health ___ Mental Retardation ___ Other Health Services ___ Parents &
 Youth ___ Senior Resources ___ Other _____

Please mail this form to Ray Reed, MCDHH, 150 Mount Vernon Street, Suite 550, Dorchester, MA 02125 or fax it to his attention at (617) 740-1699.

Saying Goodbye

by Jonathan O'Dell, Director, CATTS

In any organization, staff turnover is an inevitable fact of life. This past month, however, has been a particularly hard one for MCDHH. As you know from the Commissioner's Corner earlier in this publication, Commissioner Barbara Jean "BJ" Wood is resigning from her post to take on new challenges elsewhere. Her departure is a shock to all of us, regardless of how we choose to identify ourselves, or where we work. Her dedication and contributions to the causes of improving the quality of life and of services for the deaf, hard of hearing and late deafened citizens of Massachusetts are as legendary as they are extensive, and while her faith in our ability to carry on without her is mirrored by our confidence in ourselves, she will be sorely missed. Thank you, BJ, for having been both a personal and professional role model to so many of us, for the humility that always led you to thank us whenever anyone tried to praise you, and for having led us through so many turbulent and exciting years.

We also have to say goodbye to two dedicated members of the CATTS department, including our newsletter editor Chris Porter - who also designed the MCDHH website from scratch and has faithfully maintained it since - and Debbie Porter, our Boston-based Communication Access Training Specialist. They are moving to Ohio with their daughter Kiersten and son Jaron to be closer to their families. As their Director and friend, it is with great sadness that I see them leave, and I thank them for the personal warmth, talent and inspiration they brought to their respective jobs. You will be missed by all of us. ■

Budget Cuts ...Continued from Page 1

these items. This cut translates into sixteen to twenty individuals who need hearing aids not getting them.

There are many other cuts in operations of the agency which are too complex and detailed to describe here - for example, losing the ability to train staff. While these cuts may not be as visible, they affect the quality and level of services of the entire commission, now and in the future.

We will keep you informed as we attempt to fill these gaps, and look for your support in doing so. We are committed to maintaining the various programs and services so important to the continuation of the quality of life of Deaf, hard of hearing and late deafened citizens. ■

WHERE ARE THE OFFICES?

Boston

MCDHH - Administrative & Boston/Northeast Regional Office

150 Mount Vernon Street, #550
Boston, MA 02125
(617) 740.1600 Voice
(617) 740.1700 TTY
(800) 882.1155 Voice
(800) 530.7570 TTY
(617) 740.1699 FAX

Plymouth

MCDHH - Southeast Regional Office

67 Industrial Park Road
Plymouth, MA 02360
(508) 746.8365 FAX

Children's Specialist
(508) 747.8175 Voice
(508) 747.8176 TTY

Adult Case Manager
(508) 746.8408 Voice
(508) 746.8350 TTY

Interpreter
(508) 747.5264 Voice
(508) 747.8391 TTY

Springfield

MCDHH - Western Regional Office

Springfield State Building
436 Dwight Street, Suite 204
Springfield, MA 01103
(413) 788.6427 Voice/TTY
(413) 731.5177 FAX

Worcester

MCDHH - Central Regional Office

340 Main Street, Suite 700
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 755.4084 Voice/TTY
(508) 752.5441 FAX

Visit our Website:

<http://www.state.ma.us/mcdhh>

Our Email:

MCDHH.Office@state.ma.us

Season Greetings

Address service requested

